

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK
OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND NEXT STEPS
Joint Committee on The Master Plan for Higher Education
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Public higher education in California is in trouble, and in some measure it is adrift. The hearings of this Joint Committee have made the point clear, just as have reports in the media about the thousands of would-be students who are experiencing wait-lists for admission and enrollment.

The Master Plan for Higher Education in California 1960 – 1975 was an extraordinary document for its time. In many ways it has served the state of California well, as it has served millions of California students. The core of the Master Plan was and is the concept of differentiation of function. Differentiation of function addresses the missions of the three public segments of higher education. Each segment has a unique mission, and yet the segments overlap and share some purposes. A decision relevant to today's discussion about the Master Plan was made on a March day in 1960 when the legislation was introduced. On that afternoon at a meeting in his office, then Governor Pat Brown reinforced the bill just introduced. The California State Colleges would not be placed in the Constitution. Brown was strongly backed by then Senator George Miller, chair of the Senate Finance Committee. Miller argued from a legislative point of view – the independence from state government and the legislature of the University of California, beyond the perceived reach of the Legislature in Article IX, Section 9 of the Constitution. Brown's position was different - the proposed Master Plan addressed California and its people and the needs and capacities of the 1960s; California and its people would change and the needs of the state and its people would change. Clark Kerr (who was present at the meeting) and Glenn Dumke (who was not present, though Louis Heilbron, the chair of the State Board of Education, a Brown appointee, and subsequently the first chair of the Board of Trustees of the California State Colleges was present) were both disappointed but for different reasons. Kerr wanted the State College mission made explicit and lasting in the Constitution; Dumke and the very vocal faculty and presidents behind him wanted the constitutional freedom and implicit level of support of the University of California for the State Colleges; though Dumke's central focus was not on the doctorate or funding for research, he was supportive.

Now it is 2010. The wisdom of Pat Brown's position is clear. The needs of the state of California for higher education have changed; the most clear and apparent change is that these needs have grown, well beyond anything dreamt of in 1960. The needs of

California's people for higher education have changed; the most clear and apparent change is that these needs are different than those understood and addressed in 1960, and the needs have grown. Not only has California's population doubled, but the demographics of the state in 2010 could not have been imagined by most people in 1960. The need for education relevant to California's economy is a different public policy question in 2010, different from 1960. But California has no mechanism, short of the Legislature, to address change in public policy and public provision for higher education.

The Master Plan addressed coordination with the creation of the Coordinating Council for Higher Education. The original proposal from the Survey Team and the two boards had membership only from the segments. This was amended in the legislative process to include a few public members. But with the passing years, it became clear that coordination was principally about the cumulative interests of the segments. So in 1973 the Legislature ended the Coordinating Council and created the California Postsecondary Education Commission with a greater number of public members. CPEC does useful and essential things and currently has good and purposeful leadership. But it is not a coordinating body.

The single most important structural change that can happen at this time in California higher education is the creation of a meaningful coordinating body, a body to address the public interest for policy and provision for higher education. The public interest is not the sum of segmental interests. A meaningful coordinating body will have the capacity to address change, the issue which Pat Brown addressed in 1960, within the overall spirit and tone of the Master Plan. It is simply possible to maintain the concept of differentiation of function and serve the needs and people of the state. A useful coordinating body should not be a super-board, second guessing academic and allocation decisions by campuses and segments. It should be a board with a clear mandate to address broad public issues and provide binding decisions about these public policy issues within the framework of the executive and legislative structure of state government.

What does California need?

1. The people of California, California's economy and social fabric, need public higher education that is focused on students, students' journeys through the processes, seamlessness among the segments. The Master Plan failed students on the transfer issue. Transfer is about students, not about institutional prerogatives. An effective coordinating body will address and force the issue. Some progress has been made, but the structure does not serve students.
2. The people of California and California's leadership need a growth plan for public higher education, a growth plan that is more than the sum of segmental growth plans. Indeed, it is not inappropriate to assert that the segments do not have growth plans, but plans for the most part to move from year to year. California's population has doubled since the Master Plan. In a few years the population will be at the 50 million mark. It is useful to note that growth may have a different

- meaning from segment to segment. Oversight of academic expansion is important.
3. There is a substantial need, indeed an imperative, for a comprehensive statewide data collection system and an accompanying analytical capacity. Among other matters, an analytical capacity would address matters of supply and demand in various fields, especially the applied fields.
 4. There is an absolutely overwhelming need to address the linkages and interdependence of K-12 and higher education. A coordinating body could have a role in this. The matter of adequate K-12 preparation for higher education or the work force (including career technical education both in K-12 and in higher education) needs a strong and unified higher education voice.
 5. The establishment of a credible coordinating body, not under legislative or executive control, not a political board, would bring about an arena for addressing priorities and policy alternatives. Necessarily, a coordinating body would be beyond the segments and at the same time utilize the knowledge and experience of the segments to address a broader set of goals for the people of the state. The agenda would be a public agenda. An effective coordinating board would provide a circumstance where the people and the leaders of the segments, each accomplishing a mission, each with its own goals, would come together to address a broader set of goals.
 6. Academic matters in the context of the Master Plan are addressed at the segmental and institutional levels. Yet some academic matters are only realistically addressed at a broader level. For example, where might one address the baccalaureate production of students in engineering who begin their higher education careers in community colleges? Who is accountable for the completion of baccalaureate programs by students who begin their work in community colleges?
 7. An effective coordinating mechanism addresses both urgent and long range matters. Today the topic is finance. California has no plan for financing public higher education beyond year to year appropriations. The 1960 Master Plan assumed, explicitly, the adequate financing of public higher education through 1975, although financial difficulties appeared before the end of the 1960s, significantly for political reasons. In order that the state might have a plan for financing higher education, there must be a clear definition of what the plan is buying. That definition presently is at the segmental level and it is an operational one, from year to year. It is reasonable that the state have a student fee policy. There is none. A realistic student fee policy would encompass all student fees, those set by boards, and those set at the campus level by students establishing student fees for student facilities and activities. Protests about student fees are almost universally about fees set by boards, yet a dollar is a dollar.

A plan for financing higher education would address priorities about expenditures. Are 1,000 new freshmen more important or less important than intercollegiate athletics? The people of California fund student learning and teaching – do they wish to fund intercollegiate athletics at the expense of student learning? Are unstructured general education or major programs the most

effective use of educational resources? Would more structured general education and degree major programs enhance student learning and at the same time produce economies? Would concentrating degree programs, particularly high cost programs, on selected campuses result in economies? Are courses or programs that are essentially recreational more important or are remedial courses and state of the art technical programs to be spared budget cuts? Are programs of basic and applied research to be supported? The University of California has opened a discussion, in the context of a university-wide group about a three year baccalaureate. This is certainly possible (I would have to write that given the fact that I earned the baccalaureate in two years at a reasonably reputable institution). But it will only be practical if all three public segments are involved. Public higher education in California is a whole, not separated parts; and K-12 and adequate preparation will be essential. These are educational matters, but they are financial matters, only to be addressed practically together as issues related to the provision of public higher education for the people of California. As this paper is being completed, word is about that a game-changing agreement may be reached about transfer courses and programs between faculty and administrative leaders of the California State University and the California Community Colleges, illustrative of the point that bringing people together is productive. Financial issues such as these are addressed at the segmental or institutional level at present. A strong and credible coordinating board would create new incentives and a climate capable of addressing these financial matters and create a circumstance beyond that of the present, a circumstance where the segments and the boards could take significant charge and responsibility for the health of their public higher education on behalf of the people of California. This could be a sharp contrast with the present relationship with state government. All of these issues are both academic and financial.

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The Master Plan as a whole has been a success in that it provided a framework for the reasonably orderly development of public higher education in California. That public higher education is now in a crisis situation cannot be doubted by anyone. Translated, the futures of California's people are in jeopardy. There is no quick fix. The segments are doing what they are supposed to be doing, but the gaping hole in the Master Plan is there; coordination, the setting of goals for the whole of public higher education is yet to be addressed, and it can be fixed. The action of the Legislature and Governor could go a long way to create a new environment and forward steps. There is no likely infusion of large sums of money, but existing and likely resources can be better used, and new resources can be achieved. One observation about public higher education in California in 2010 may be to the point. For the first time since 1960, all three segments of public higher education in California have strong leadership simultaneously. This could provide the circumstance for a new level of cooperation and collaboration. We are not meant to be in competition with one another.

It has been my sense for the past year that the three segments need to take charge of the crisis of 2010. California needs more university educated

individuals, not fewer, and in the short and intermediate ranges, that can only happen with a change in funding that will not be easy, or popular with people within higher education. The most likely productive approach is a strong coordinating mechanism, collaboration among the segments as a way of life. The three segments of public higher education serve the people of California, and there is no doubt that they serve the people well.

The Joint Legislative Committee has an opportunity to open a new future for the people of California.
